(b) the steps being taken to ensure adequate water supply to the States particularly to Kalahandi, Nuapuara, Bolangir and Korapui districts of Orissa and the time by which it is likely to be done ?

THE MINISTER OF RURAL AREAS AND EMPLOYMENT (SHRI KINJARAPPU YERRANNAIDU) : (a) As on 31.5.1997, 110023 and 28823 habitations have been covered fully or partially with safe drinking water facilities in the State of Orissa and Gujarat respectively. The district-wise break-up are kept by the State Governments and are not maintained by the Central Government.

(b) All the 'Not Covered' habitations are likely to be provided safe drinking water facilities by 1997-98 and the 'Partially Covered' habitations by 2000 A.D. The State Governments have prepared action plans and are implementing schemes under the Centrally Sponsored Accelerated Rural Water Supply Programme, the State Sector Minimum Needs Programme and the Basic Minimum Services. An allocation of Rs. 41.73 crore for Orissa and Rs. 49.87 crore for Gujarat has been made under the ARWSP for 1997-98. 50% of the allocation has been released.

Rural Electrification Programme

403. SHRI MANIKRAO HODLYA GAVIT : Will the Minister of POWER be pleased to state :

(a) whether the progress in respect of Rural Electrification Programme has been much less in Maharashtra than that in other States;

(b) if so, the reasons therefore;

(c) the number of villages in every district of Maharashtra which are proposed to be brought under this programme during the Ninth Five Year Plan; and

(d) the amount proposed to be spent on the above programme ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY AND MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF POWER (SHRI YOGINDER K. ALAGH) : (a) and (b) No. Sir. Maharashtra State Electricity Board has reported that out of the 39.354 inhabited villages in the State as per 1981 Census. 39.106 villages had been electrified by the end of March, 1989. For the remaining 248 villages Government of Maharashtra has reported that it is not feasible to provide electrification.

(c) and (d) Rural Electrification is a continuous process and the targets for electrification are fixed on an year to year basis. Programme for the 9th Plan is under finalisation by the Planning Commission.

Theft of Software from Delhi Doordarshan

404. SHRI RAM BAHADUR SINGH :
SHRI CHUN CHUN PRASAD YADAV :
SHRI CHANDRA BHUSHAN SINGH :

Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state:

(a) whether any theft of costly software from Delhi Doordarshan has recently been detected;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether any enquiry to pin point the responsibility for the theft has been made; and

(d) if so, the details thereof and the action taken by the Government in this regard ?

THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY) : (a) and (b) Hard discs from nine Personal Computers from the newsroom of Doordarshan Kendra, Delhi were found stolen on 31st May, 1997.

(c) and (d) The investigating team of Delhi Police examined the newsroom on the same day and investigations are still in progress.

Task Force on Telecommunication Services

405. DR. LAXMINARAYAN PANDEY : Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state :

(a) whether attention of the Government has been drawn to the newsitem captioned 'Task Force recommends opening of Telecom Sector' appeared in the Hindustan Times dated June 15, 1997;

(b) if so, the facts and details thereof; and

(c) the reaction of the Union Government thereto ?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The Task Force has recommended that the Government should have imaginative and far sighted

policies and that the Government will have to come up with policies which encourage competition and allow free play of market dynamics. It has also recommended that the Finance Ministry should also come up with incentives as has already been done for encouraging the telecom sector. The Government will also have to focus on the long term strategic aspect like the development of skilled manpower. If these are done, it will be possible for the Indian telecom industry to emerge as global player and for the Indian domestic market to grow at an explosive rate.

(c) In pursuance of the National Telecom Policy 1994, the Government of India has already invited Indian Registered private companies to participate in Telecom Services Sector in a competitive environment. The Finance Ministry has also announced Telecom Sector as Infrastructure and consequential fiscal incentives.

[Translation]

Problem of Power in Delhi

406. SHRI JAI PRAKASH AGARWAL :
SHRI RANJIB BISWAL :

Will the Minister of POWER be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Union Government have received some schemes/proposals/memoranda from Delhi Government during last three years till date for solving the problem of power in Delhi;

(b) if so, the details therefore;

(c) the amount of assistance provided to the Government of Delhi for this purpose during each of the last three years;

(d) the manner in which Delhi Government has utilised the amount of assistance and the achievements made in this regard; and

(e) the details of the schemes/proposals/memoranda under consideration of the Government alongwith the time by which they are likely to be finalised ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY AND MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF POWER (SHRI YOGINDER K. ALAGH) . (a) to (e) The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

[English]

Issuance of Life Time Free Travel Passes

407. SHRI MOHAN RAWALE : Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Railway Board has taken a decision to allow life-time free and endless AC first class travel to retired members of the Board and their families;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the reasons and justification thereof;

(d) whether the Federation of Railway Officers Association has passed a resolution requesting the Railway Board to rethink on the Platinum Pass privilege and speedy withdrawal of the same; and

(e) if so, the reaction of the Government thereto ?

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN) : (a) and (b) Retired Board Members are issued Complimentary card passes which entitle them to travel alongwith eligible members of their family or a companion subject to the condition that they will not avail more than 2 berths in I-AC or 2 seats in Executive Class. In case of Rajdhani Express trains they can avail either 2 berths in I-AC/AC Sleeper or four berths in 3 AC.

(c) These facilities are granted in token of appreciation of the contribution made by the Retired Board Members to Indian Railways and are in lieu of the three post retirement complimentary cheque passes to which they were eligible annually.

(d) Yes, Sir.

(e) The scheme has been evolved after due consideration of all the issues. It is not considered desirable to revoke it.

[Translation]

Separate Corporation for Speed Post Service

408. SHRIMATI PURNIMA VERMA :
SHRI RAMESHWAR PATIDAR :

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state :